

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC369825
Inspection date	2 June 2010
Inspector	Trevor Hall
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	17 November 2009
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is a children's home that is part of a large organisation operated by a local authority. The home provides care for up to two young people aged between 10 to under 18 years on admission who have significant, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is a three bedroom semi-detached house, situated on a housing estate and the young people are able to access local leisure activities in the immediate neighbourhood. The home has transport to take the young people to those facilities that are a greater travelling distance away. The home provides each of the young people with an individual bedroom. To the rear of the building is an enclosed garden, which provides space for a range of activities. To the front of the building is a small garden with no off road parking facilities.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection. All key standards in all outcome areas were assessed. Two young people gave their views on living here. The inspection also considered how the home is managed, how staff are supported and good practice recommendations made following the last inspection.

Young people are fully involved in their care planning and decision making processes and feel confident about contributing their views to the running of the home. They enjoy positive relationships with staff which helps them to feel settled and to make good progress. Staff are consistent in their approach to young people and behaviour is managed at the lowest level, which indicates that staff are successful in the positive way that they work with the young people.

Young people are cared for safely by a competent team of staff, who work well together and who are supported by clear policies and procedures, supervision and relevant training. Staff encourage young people to develop a healthy lifestyle and work hard to ensure that they are able to pursue and achieve to their individual potential. Staff also support young people to maintain positive relationships with their families and significant others.

The overall quality rating for the home is good, with the manager being required to take steps in relation to five good practice recommendations. These relate to: improving the recording of external complaints; improving the recording of when young people's meetings take place and ensuring that the home's admission and discharge log is up to date and accurate. There is a need to ensure that regular monthly visits are made to the home and that these visits are done by appropriate people and that the reports they write are factually accurate.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection menu recording has improved as has the amount of nutritional forethought in the menu planning process. Menu records confirm that young people are provided with a balanced menu that demonstrates a clear understanding of what constitutes a healthy nutritious diet. The menus produced show a good awareness of cultural and religious practices, ensuring that each young person receives a diet specific to their needs.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are supported so that their health and well-being are actively promoted. Staff involve and engage with young people about a range of issues that enables them to be more aware about their own health.

Menu records confirm that young people are provided with a balanced menu that demonstrates a clear understanding of what constitutes a healthy nutritious diet. The menus produced show a good awareness of cultural and religious practices, ensuring that each young person receives a diet specific to their needs. The home encourages all young people to celebrate culturally significant festivals and to be tolerant and respectful of each young person's belief and cultural heritage.

Young people at this home are receiving a good service that is clearly focused on their emotional well-being and health needs. Staff are actively involved in engaging with young people about a range of health-related issues which result in consistent improvements to health and fitness. Young people's good health and well-being is being successfully promoted because staff are knowledgeable and aware of each individual young person's needs.

Relevant information is obtained from a range of sources to ensure the home is fully informed about the health and emotional needs of young people. Young people are able to access appropriate services because the home is quick to respond to changing needs and circumstances. Young people's health needs are being well promoted because the home's records highlight the range of medical services that have been accessed. The home's manager acts as a strong advocate for the needs of young people in relation to accessing external advice and services.

Young people's health and safety is also promoted through the home's policies and procedures for the safe storage and administration of medication. Administration records demonstrate staff are following pharmacy instructions in relation to the health needs of individual young people. Medication records are seen as key to the effective management of healthcare matters. The home has a sustained record of full compliance with the administration, safekeeping and disposal of medication. Overall, young people's health and safety is protected through the organisation, management and administration of medication.

Staff respond to accidents and unforeseen medical needs appropriately as they have access to first aid boxes and are trained in basic first aid skills. Young people's health and safety is further promoted by managers who monitor all accidents and injuries that occur in the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home has effective policies, procedures and care practices, which ensure that young people are cared for safely. For example, risk assessments and support plans ensure that staff have appropriate strategies in place to protect young people. Young people say that they 'feel safe in the home.' They are protected from potential abuse because staff are properly trained and have a good understanding of the home's procedures for reporting and managing safeguarding concerns.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is promoted by sound guidance and good staff practice. Staff ensure that they do not enter young people's rooms without knocking. Young people's care records are maintained securely and contents are not discussed inappropriately. Staff are aware of the young people's right to privacy and how this may be safely promoted.

Young people say that they do not believe that bullying is an issue in the home, but that if there is a problem, 'staff deal with it.' The privacy and confidentiality of young people is properly respected. Young people have individual bedrooms, where they can be private and where they can keep their personal possessions safe. There is clear evidence to show that when room searches occur, they are for a valid reason and that staff follow correct procedures and record such events appropriately.

There is a very clear complaints procedure which is made known to young people when they come to live in the home. Young people clearly understand how to make a formal complaint and say that they feel confident about letting staff know if they are unhappy with any aspect of their care. The home has good policies on reacting to external complaints, however, these are not always being recorded correctly, as such it is possible that a false impression is being maintained about the home's impact on the local community.

There is a robust protocol for managing unauthorised absences to keep young people safe. Staff encourage young people to let them know where they will be when they leave the home and keep in touch with them by phone if they are away. Individual risk assessments identify the specific issues in relation to unauthorised absences which staff need to consider. If a young person goes missing, staff work closely with police and other agencies to help ensure the safe return of the young person to the home.

The young people living at this home are aware of the reason they are being looked after and how staff will promote their safety and protection within the home and in public places. Staff are fully aware of the types of behaviour which young people may display and accordingly develop risk assessments that minimise the potential for young people to subject themselves or others to harm. Young people are encouraged to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour after such incidents to learn how to help themselves to be safe and behave responsibly.

Young people are encouraged and supported by their carers to behave in ways that will help prepare them for returning home or eventual independence. Staff help young people identify and maintain safe behavioural boundaries that will help their reintegration and personal development. Young people confirm that staff help them address their problems and behaviour.

Staff working at the children's home take some positive steps to keep children and visitors safe from all environmental hazards including fire. For example, risk assessments on the environment are completed and updated on a regular basis and staff within the home are all involved in these routines to ensure that health and safety is promoted by everyone. Portable appliance testing (PAT), for electrical safety has been done on all equipment in the home and all safety equipment has been serviced with approved regularity and is properly maintained. This home takes the safety and welfare of its residents seriously and young people do live in a home which is both physically safe and secure.

This home has robust procedures in place for the monitoring of visitors to the home. Staff personnel files were not available on the inspection date, due to them being held centrally

elsewhere, these will be examined at a later date. The responsible local authority has a clearly defined recruitment process which protects young people by ensuring that all of the NMS requirements are met, in all instances, prior to any staff member being deployed into the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The progress and development of young people is well documented in their files and shows how the young people are supported, by being provided with regular opportunities to spend individual time with their key worker. The home's records show that these sessions provide young people with the opportunity to talk about particular issues relevant to them as individuals and to receive support and guidance consistent with their needs. Staff know the young people well and are able to respond to them in a way that considers and respects them as individuals. External services are requested as necessary to meet the needs of individual young people.

Arrangements for young people's education are promoted in the home's education policy which clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of residential staff in relation to school attendance and learning. Staff give active practical and emotional support to the young people who have difficulties with school in addition to the normal level of support provided for all young people at the home. Each young person has a detailed individual education plan describing how a young person's education needs will be met. Staff also ensure young people have informal educational opportunities and support the young people to complete their education homework.

All young people are supported and encouraged to participate in hobbies and activities of their choice within and outside of the home. Staff ensure that there is a correct balance between supervised and unsupervised time. This is risk assessed and takes into consideration the age, gender, abilities and interests of the young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The care received by each young person living at this home is particularly effective because each individual has a placement plan that identifies the purpose of the placement and how the authority's care plan for the young person will be progressed. Case files confirm that the young people's progress is reviewed within the statutory time periods. Staff attend regular in-house meetings to record and update each young person's general progress during the interim period. Monthly reports are completed by key workers and the home prepares chronological reports to keep placing authorities informed. Placement plans include summarised health and education plan details.

Young people are appropriately supported to maintain contact with their families in line with arrangements detailed within their care plans. Young people are supported by staff wherever necessary during family visits. Placement plans and supportive case file records make explicit the authorised arrangements for contact between each young person, their family, friends and professional workers such as social workers.

The home has all necessary policies, procedures and staff guidance on the admission to and discharge from the home. The admission and discharge register, however, has not always been maintained with the required degree of accuracy.

The home's records confirm that young people are actively involved with the decision-making processes within the home. Records of house meetings, however, do not always make it clear who has attended or whether meetings have been offered, but refused by the young people. Regular informative dialogue between staff and young people takes place when considering any issues that affect the running of the home. The interactions between staff and young people reveal that the home continues to provide a relaxed setting where the involvement of young people is used to positively shape the nature of the care provided.

Staff meeting minutes demonstrate that issues with young people are dealt with using a consistent, safety-conscious approach within clearly agreed parameters. The young people's meeting records, key worker sessions and the home's general records continue to support the view that staff are enabled to offer realistic boundaries, be consistent in practice and promote the welfare of each young person in a positive manner.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive adequate allowances to cover personal requisites and clothing and are well informed about their entitlements because the home has good arrangements and systems in place to manage allowances, personal needs and pocket money. Key workers are responsible for ensuring that the young people maintain an appropriate stock of essential clothing. Once these are established and maintained, the young people are at liberty to save their money for special items of choice. Pocket money is clearly recorded and being paid to the young people on a weekly basis.

Young people living at this home are appropriately supported to prepare for leaving the home whether this is to return home, to alternative carers or to move into independent living. Young people, when appropriate, are provided with properly constituted pathway plans, agreed by the placing authorities which give focus to preparing young people to appropriately leave the home. Preparation for leaving care and acquiring the skills for successful semi-independent living are an integral part of the care packages currently being provided by the home.

The accommodation is domestic in style, homely, well-decorated, maintained and furnished to a good standard, as a result young people enjoy a pleasant living environment. They respect the quality of the accommodation, particularly within their own bedrooms. Young people confirmed they enjoy having the space to follow their interests and hobbies as well as relaxing in good homely surroundings. The home provides the right environment to ensure the social and personal needs of each young person are being met.

A programme of maintenance and repair is ongoing, however, this does not impact on the care young people receive. There are good systems in place that recognise maintenance issues and those with health and safety implications are rectified as a priority with evidence that demonstrates the owners invest generously in the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This is a good home that is very well managed. The quality of the home's management impacts directly on the quality of the care and support young people receive within the home. Good communication is a feature of the home, which enables each staff team to be well informed

about daily events, routines and the progress of each young person. Staff know and understand the stated aims and objectives of the service which is consistent with the home's Statement of Purpose.

The Registered Manager provides good day-to-day support to staff whose commitment to providing a consistent quality of service is a strength of the home. Young people enjoy being looked after by a consistent group of staff, who cover most absences themselves. When cover staff are deployed into the home every effort is made to ensure that these staff are already known to the young people. Residents are well informed about what the home does because staff take time to explain and describe the services offered and how they can be adapted to suit individual needs.

The home provides a good range of information about its stated aims and purpose. Young people are given a booklet in an appropriate format to help them learn about what the home provides. The number of staff on duty is always enough to meet the needs of young people which supports their welfare and protection. The owning organisation has an induction, core training programme and support system in place that helps to provide staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to support and care for young people.

There is good leadership and management support because the Registered Manager is qualified, skilled and experienced and provides strong and effective leadership to the staff team and young people. The Registered Manager is actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the home and has clear expectations that the staff team will achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people in their care. Staff receive regular one to one supervision from either the home's manager or one of the seniors, at the frequency required by the national minimum standards.

Young people are being looked after by a staff group that is relatively experienced, and enthusiastic which currently meets the required level of qualifications in child care required by the national minimum standards. There is a good emphasis given to staff training and development which is focused on areas relating to young people's needs.

Young people are provided with appropriate levels of supervision and support because staff manage their time effectively and are deployed in a way that meets their needs. The staff rotas are flexible to meet the changing needs and circumstances of young people. Good management systems are in place to share information between different shift teams. Young people are being nurtured and comprehensively supported because their needs are being met and risks are managed in a preventative way.

Good systems are in place to monitor the service and daily lives of young people currently living in the home. The local authority has established a pattern of management monitoring and reporting procedures, which is effectively implemented by the home's Registered Manager. The local authority, however, has not always conducted these inspections looking at welfare issues within the home each month as required by the national minimum standards.

The monthly inspections that have been conducted have not always had the local councillor involvement indicated in the authorities procedures. No local councillor has visited the home in the last three months.

Records seen demonstrate that the content of these reports reflect a generally accurate picture of life for young people resident here, however, they do on occasion contain assumptions, that are not supported by fact. For example the report of the April 2010 visit states 'Both young people are involved in all aspects of the life of the home. They attend the House meetings....' This is not borne out by the evidence of the house meeting log, one current resident is yet to attend any young people's meeting, despite having lived in the home for over three months. These reports are available to staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All of the home's recording systems take account of potential needs in relation to a young person's diversity such as identity, race, culture and religion. The home provides an environment where the value of equality and diversity is understood, promoted and celebrated.

The Registered Manager is actively monitoring and evaluating the practice standards of staff and the quality of services being provided. Managers take an active role in the evaluation of the service and the impact the home is having on the care of young people. The manager has access to feedback from placing authorities, parents and young people. Areas for improvement are quickly identified or anticipated and positive steps are agreed and implemented to overcome any difficulties and to carefully plan the development of the service.

Young people's care files are very well organised to include all of the information detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Confidential or third party information is kept in a separate section of the care file to enable the home to respond, in a timely manner, to any request made by a young person to read their care file.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that there is a procedure for handling external complaints and that these complaints are properly recorded. (NMS 16.4)
- ensure that the home's admission and discharge log is accurately maintained (NMS. 5)
- ensure that records of young people's meetings indicate when these have been offered , but refused by young people (NMS 8.1)
- ensure that where the person carrying on the home does not manage the home on a day to day basis, they must visit the home at least once a month in accordance with the regulations (NMS 32.1)

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- ensure that those conducting the monthly visit on behalf of those carrying on the home are appropriate to do so and that the reports they submit are factually accurate. (NMS. 32.1).